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ABSTRACT

Studies have shown that, in small groups, two types of leaders generally emerge, i.e., a task specialist concerned with achieving the group's goals and a social-emotional specialist concerned with the morale and cohesiveness of the group. To determine if leadship style is related to sex role orientation, rather than to biological sex, to demonstrate that this notion generalizes to groups of different size and sex role composition, and to examine the stability of leadership patterns over time, college students (N=500) completed the Bem Sex Role Inventory. Masculine males (N=12), feminine females (N=12), androgynous males (N=12), and androgynous females (N=12) were selected to form 12 groups consisting of one person each from each sex role category. Each group met 1 hour per week for 4 weeks to discuss legal cases. Discussions were videotaped and scored using Bales Interation Process Analysis. Results supported the contention that sex role orientation and group leadership behavior were the result of socialization rather than biology. Results also demonstrated that leadership styles were stable over time and attested to the utility of a synthesis of theoretical perspectives on androgyny and leadership as a way to provide a more balanced conception of leadership. These findings may benefit both women and men by helping them to recognize important skills each individual can contribute to group functioning. (PAS)

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Sex-role orientation and leadership style:

Further exploration

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A paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association, Washington, D.C., August 23, 1982.

Studies of small group behavior have shown that in such groups two types of leaders generally emerge- a task specialist who has an instrumental orientation directed towards achieving the group's goals and a social-emotional specialist concerned with the morale and cohesiveness of the group (Bales, 1951). Bales originally conceptualized these leadership functions as independent and found that they were usually fulfilled by different people (Bales, 1955, 1958). However, later research has demonstrated that a single person can and frequently does fulfill both functions (Lewis, 1972; Turk, 1961).

Recently, several authors who have reviewed the literature on leadership have noted inconsistencies in the findings (Hollander, 1979; Riger & Galligan, 1980), particularly in regard to the performance of females in same versus mixed sex groups and in laboratory studies versus actual positions of leadership. Much of the difficulty arises from the heavy reliance which has been placed on biological sex as an explanatory concept by the researchers who followed Bales.

Studies of mixed gender groups (Kenkel, 1957; Lockheed & Hall, 1976) in a wide range of situations have found that males are more likely than females to display task-oriented styles of leadership and females are more likely than males to display social-emotional leadership styles, and that males and females who conform to these sex-stereotyped leadership styles are evaluated more favorably by others (Bartol & Butterfield, 1976; Petty & Miles, 1976).

Studies of groups composed of members of the same biological sex, however, have shown that there is no difference in the number of task-oriented or social-emotional acts produced by males and females (Eskilson & Wiley, 1976; Lockheed & Hall, 1976). One explanation for the difference in findings between the same sex and mixed sex group situations is that females may be supressing their capacity for instrumental or task-oriented behavior when they are in mixed sex

settings. For instance, a study by Megargee (1969) illustrates that females may have the capacity for instrumental behavior, but often do not evidence it either because of lack of experience, perceived lack of efficacy or because they see such behavior as inappropriate due to the sex-role contraints of the situation.

Bales (1953, 1958) conceived of the two leadership roles as complementary and saw both as necessary for the smooth functioning of the group. He concluded, however, that the social-emotional leader was the "real" leader of the group because social-emotional skills could generalize from situation to situation whereas the skills of the task-oriented leader were often task specific. Later research has largely ignored this conclusion and the implications which can be derived from it, focusing instead on task-orientation as the equivalent of leadership ability. Studies have shown that males are attributed more task-oriented leadership ability than females are (Fallon & Hollander, 1976) and that task orientation is associated with the likelihood of being chosen as a leader (Eskilson & Wiley, 1976) and with increased influence, but not with increased group satisfaction (Hollander & Yoder, in press).

Despite Bales' original conception that both leadership function are necessary and valueable and despite the findings of Stogdill (1974) that leaders are rated as most effective when they score high on both dimensions, social-emotional skills are not highly valued and are given low weight in the determination of leadership (Slater, 1955). Because women are seen to lack task-oriented skills, they are less likely than males to either be chosen as leaders or to seek the leadership role (Eskilson & Wiley, 1976) and their success in leadership positions is not valued either by themselves or by others (Bass, Krusell & Alexander, 1971; Rosen, Jerdee & Prestwich, 1975).

Bem's (1974) androgyny theory is based on the same two underlying dimensions (instrumental and expressive) as Bales' leadership theory. The difference between the two is that for Bem these qualities are synthesized in the individual's personality, whereas for Bales they are synthesized in the group. However, a small group is composed of individual personalities and individuals who have been socialized to display instrumental or expressive personality characteristics are likely to adopt corresponding roles in small group settings.

The focus of this line of research has been aimed at an integration of androgyny and leadership theories. The importance of this is that it shifts the emphasis from biological sex to sex role orientation as a mediator of leadership functions. This means that females are not automatically relegated to the social-emotional role. The realization that a person of any gender can legitimately fill the task leader's role should actively discourage the current bias towards choosing males for task leadership positions. More importantly, however, this integration of theories should spur a return to conceptualizing leadership in terms of a dialectical synthesis of task and social-emotional functions. Hopefully, once again both of these roles will be seen as complementary and equal in importance. This would mean that females displaying a social-emotional role would be seen as making a legitimate and necessary contribution to the functioning of the group.

Empirical support for the contention that leadership style is related to sex-role orientation rather than to biological sex has been provided by two previous studies by the present author. In the first (Korabik, 1982), scores on the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI) were related to those on the Ohio State Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire. Masculinity was found to be significantly and positively correlated with an initiating structure (instrumental)

style of leadership and femininity was significantly and positively correlated with a consideration (expressive) style of leadership. In addition, multiple regression analyses demonstrated that sex-role orientation was a significant predictor of leadership style, whereas biological sex was not.

In the second study, forty triads, consisting of one androgynous person (either male or female) paired with two sex-typed persons of either the same or opposite biological sex, were asked to discuss human relations problems for 75 minutes. The verbal output of each subject was categorized into task-oriented and social-emotional acts. Androgynous males and females did not differ significantly in percentage of task-oriented or social-emotional acts, but androgynous subjects made significantly more social-emotional and significantly less task-oriented statements than masculine males and significantly less social-emotional and significantly more task-oriented statements than feminine females. Contrary to expectation, andorgynous subjects did not modify their proportion of task-oriented and social-emotional comments as a function of the group composition.

The present study sought to demonstrate that these findings would generalize to groups of different size and sex-role composition and to a different discussion task. Furthermore, it examined the stability of the leadership patterns over time. Slater (1955) found that in groups of previously unacquainted subjects the structure of leadership roles fluctuated over four 40 minute periods.

Method. The BSRI was administered to approximately 500 introductory psychology students. Twelve masculine males, 12 feminine females, 12 androgynous males and 12 androgynous females were selected to participate in the study. Only subjects who fell into the appropriate sex-role categories using both the t-score and the median split scoring methods were used.

Subjects interacted in 12 four person groups with one person from each sex-role category in each group. Each group met for one hour per week on four consecutive weeks to discuss legal cases. The discussions were videotaped and scored using Bales Interaction Process Analysis by two independent observers who were blind to the sex-role orientation of the subjects they were rating. The verbal behavior of each subject was classified into the percentage of task-oriented (categories 4, 5 and 6) and social-emotional (categories 1, 2 and 3) acts as a function of total verbal output. Inter-rater reliabilities for a random sample of 25% of the videotapes were .86 for task-orientated and .90 for social-emotional output. The data were transformed by log (x+1) and then subjected to 4 (Sex-role category) X 4 (Sessions) analyses of variance with repeated measures on the second factor.

Results. There was a significant main effect for sex-role category for both dependent variables, F (3,44)=3.7, $p<.02$ for task-oriented acts, and F (3,44)=6.0, $p<.002$ for social-emotional acts. Newman-Keuls analysis showed that masculine males, androgynous males and androgynous females did not differ significantly in percentage of task-oriented acts, $p>.05$. Feminine females produced significantly fewer task-oriented acts than masculine males, $p<.05$, or androgynous males, $p<.05$, but did not differ significantly from androgynous females, $p>.05$ (see Figure 1). For social-emotional output, there were no significant differences between masculine males and androgynous males, $p>.05$, or between feminine females and androgynous females, $p>.05$. However, androgynous females produced significantly greater percentages of social-emotional acts than both masculine and androgynous males, $p<.05$ and feminine females produced significantly greater percentages of social-emotional acts than both masculine males, $p<.05$, and androgynous males, $p<.01$ (see Figure 2). Neither the main effect for sessions nor the groups X sessions interaction was significant, $p>.05$.

Discussion. The results of this study lend general support to the contention that sex-role orientation and group leadership behavior are influenced by the same two underlying dimensions and that these dimensions are the result of socialization rather than biology. As exprected androgynous persons of both genders evidenced the same high level of task-orientation as masculine males, but feminine females were deficient in task-orientation in comparison with the other subjects. The results for expressiveness were less clear. It was expected that feminine females, androgynous females and androgynous males would all be high in social-emotional output in comparison to masculine males. However, andorgynous males were lower in social-emotional output than expected. This is probably a function of the sex-role demands of the situation. Because there were equal numbers of males and females in this study, sex may have been a more salient factor to the subjects in this study as compared to the previous one. In addition, the nature of the task may have been a factor. The legal cases produced a higher proportion of task-oriented to social-emotional output than the human relations problems used previously. Perhaps androgynous females were more likely to perceive the social-emotional aspects of the task than were androgynous males. These findings suggest the need for replication with groups of different sex and sex-role composition and with different discussion tasks in order to isolate the contributing factors. Finally, this study demonstrated that leadership styles are stable over time.

In general, these results attest to the utility of a synthesis of theoretical perspectives on androgyny and leadership. Such an integration of theories would provide a more balanced conception of leadership which would benefit both women and men by recognizing inportant skills that each individual can contribute to group functioning. Future research in this area should concentrate on the manner in which the sex-role composition of the group and the sex-typing of the task

determine the proportion of task-oriented and social-emotional output contributed by individual group members.

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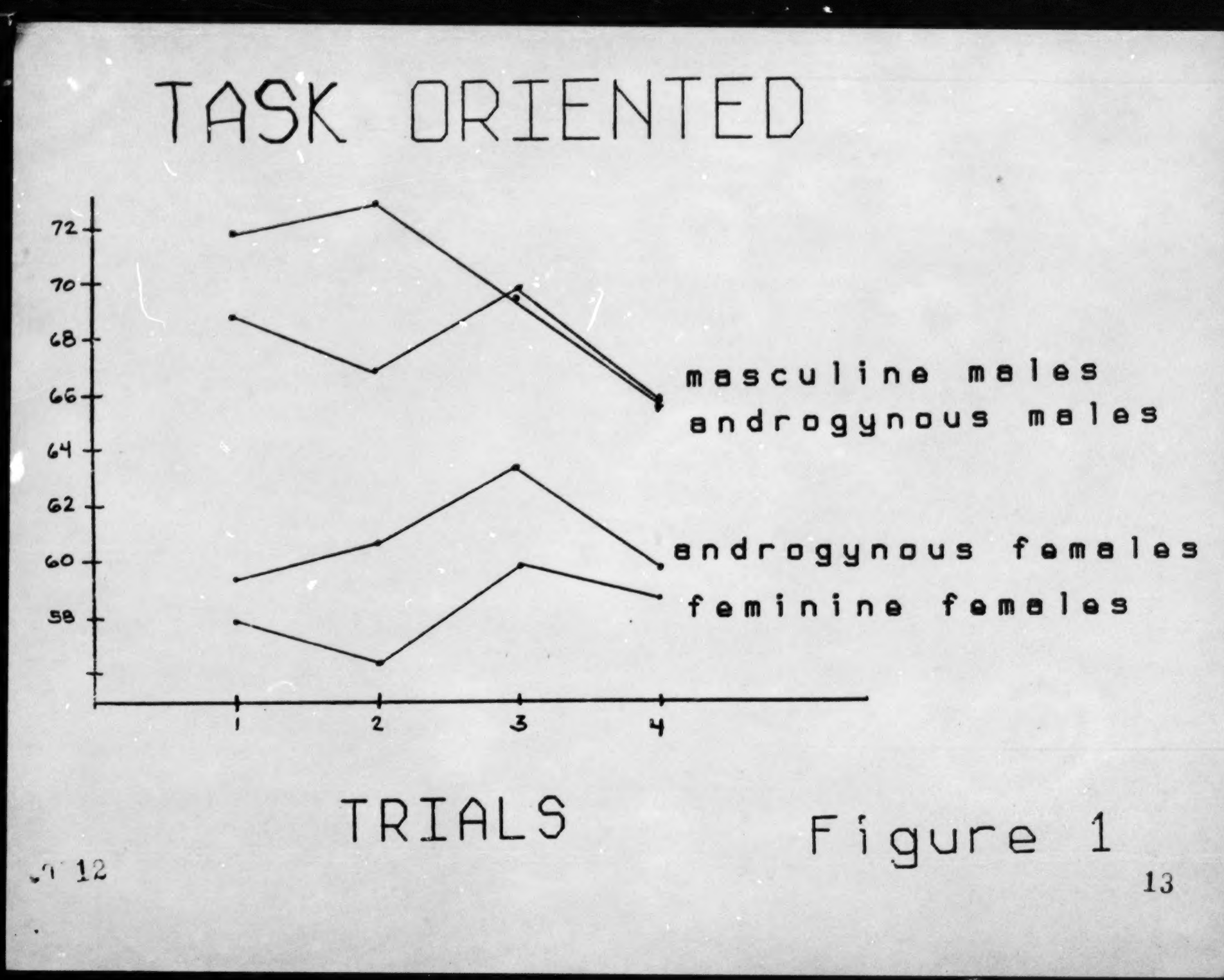
TASK ORIENTED
72
70
68
66
64
62
60
58
1
2
3
4
masculine males
androgynous males
androgynous females
feminine females
TRIALS

Figure 1

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL

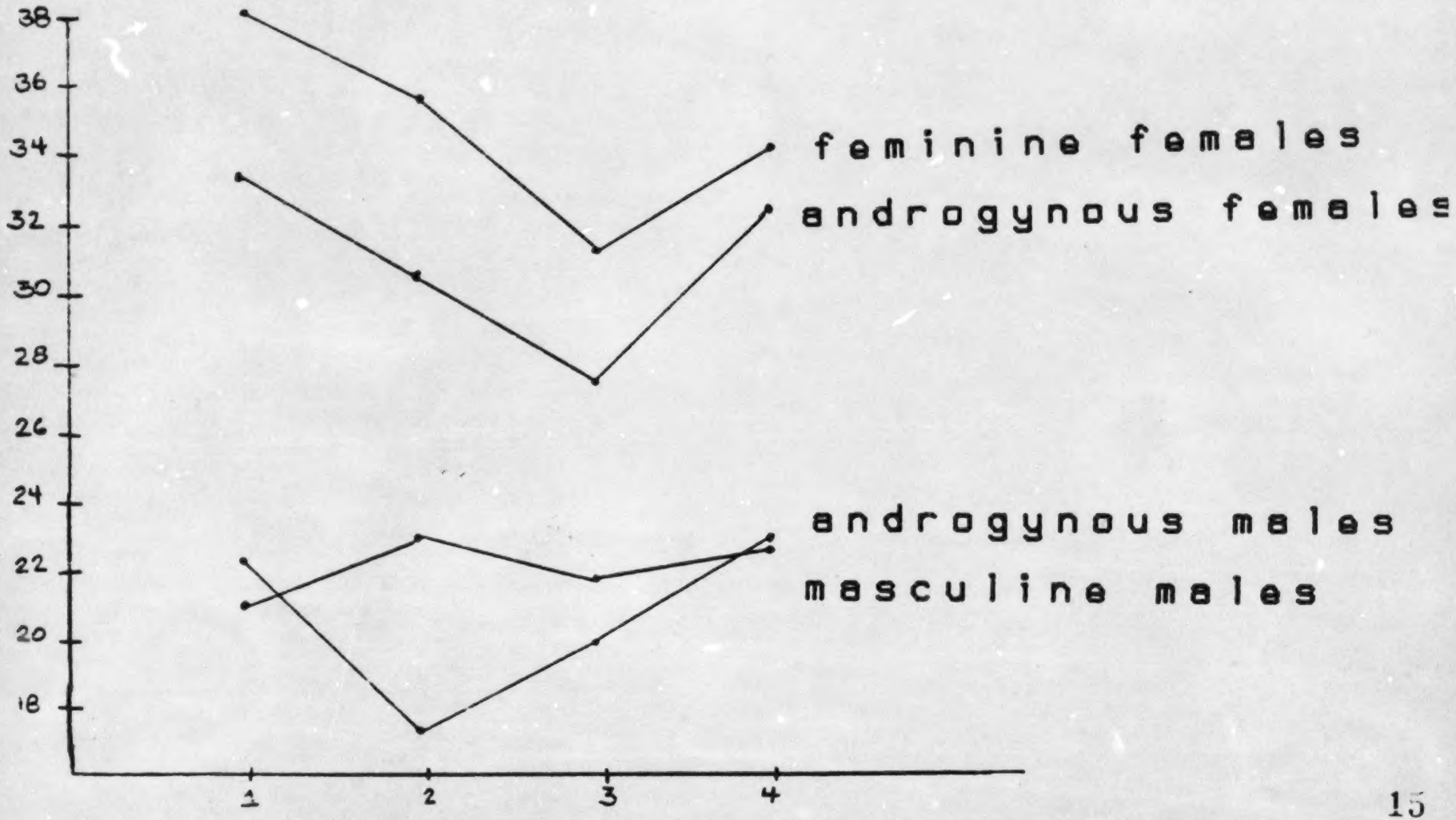

Figure 2